



"Sometimes...It Takes A Village To Promote Alternate Modes"

How the "Meet Your Neighbor"
concept helped improve alternate
mode usage in targeted areas.

Melissa Minerich, RideShare Representative
Gayle Johnson, Employer Representative, Travel Reduction Program
Pima Association of Governments
177 North Church Avenue, Suite 405
Tucson, AZ 85701
(520) 792-1093 FAX (520) 620-6981
mminerich@pagnet.org gjohnson@pagnet.org
www.pagnet.org

INTRODUCTION

TRAVEL REDUCTION PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Pima Association of Governments' (PAG) Travel Reduction Program (TRP) has been implemented in Pima County, Arizona since 1989 as an ordinance based program, state and locally funded. The purpose of the TRP is to improve regional air quality and reduce traffic congestion by encouraging the use of alternate modes of transportation (carpooling, taking the bus, bicycling and walking) or special programs such as compressed work weeks or telecommuting.

Employers with 100 or more full-time equivalent (FTE) employees at a single or contiguous work site must participate in the TRP. These employers are considered "major employers." The mandatory requirements of the TRP are: appoint a Transportation Coordinator (TC) to administer the program, annually conduct a survey of employees transportation patterns, annually write and implement a TRP plan, and annually distribute alternate mode information to employees.

During the survey process, employers are instructed to survey all full and part-time employees. Any contract or temporary employees at the TRP site are not included in the survey process. After an employer completes the survey process, they are provided with a survey analysis report which highlights their employee's responses to the survey. The survey analysis report can then be used as a planning tool to help employers in the TRP identify activities they can implement to increase alternate mode usage and reduce vehicle miles traveled to their work site. **(See Exhibit 1).**

One particular activity that has proven most effective in our region for encouraging alternate mode usage is a Transportation Fair. At this event, vendors from the transportation and business industries are invited to display their products and services promoting alternate modes of transportation. The employees are able to ask the vendors questions to find out more information and also sign up for prize drawings at the event. A transportation fair is a great way to urge employees to consider using an alternate mode while at the same time, promote awareness of how important air quality is to our environment.

RIDESHARE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The RideShare Program is a free carpool matching and alternate mode information service, administered by Pima Association of Governments and funded by the U.S. Federal Highway Administration. Whereas TRP is a mandated program for specific employers, RideShare is a region-wide program for the promotion of alternate modes of transportation. Established in response to the energy crisis of the early 70's, RideShare successfully promotes carpooling, bicycling, walking and transit. Thousands of commuters have used RideShare's resources to save millions in gasoline and automobile costs. Most importantly, RideShare and its participants have helped improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion and preserve the livability of our community.

Free printed materials are available to schools, employers or individuals interested in saving money, improving air quality and reducing traffic congestion through the use of alternate modes of transportation. Employers or organizations wishing to promote alternate modes and their benefits at the work site or at an event can contact RideShare staff for assistance.

Commuters interested in carpooling can utilize RideShare's free and confidential referral service to locate other individuals traveling to work. In addition to information on alternate modes of transportation, RideShare supports the utilization of telecommuting or work-at-home programs by providing general information, handbooks, videos, on-site help and instruction to employers and individuals who are interested in developing a program at their work site.

PRE-EVENT PLANNING FOR "MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR" EVENT

Partnering with RideShare, the "Meet Your Neighbor" (MYN) concept was derived from a TRP employer's request to host a transportation fair and invite all surrounding TRP employers to the event. The main purpose of the event would be to provide employees with information on using alternate modes of transportation, while at the same time, offering them a convenient and relaxing environment to learn more about alternate modes as well as what other businesses and services are in their area. Another reason for having a MYN event would be to increase the number of carpool registrants in the RideShare database. The more employees registered at a particular employer, the better the chances are of generating a successful matchlist.

The first step to planning a MYN event is to identify an employer in a targeted area to host a planning luncheon. Once the employer has agreed to host the planning luncheon, the next step is to identify employers in the targeted area to invite to the planning luncheon. A list of prospective TRP and non-TRP (less than 100 FTE) employers is compiled in order to determine the boundaries for the event since employees shouldn't have to travel long distances to attend the MYN event.

Telephone calls were made to prospective employers on the list to inform them of the upcoming planning luncheon and to see if they were interested in attending. We determined that the luncheon would be approximately 1-1/2 hours. We felt that one hour wouldn't be enough time to have an interactive session to discuss ideas and plan the MYN event. Once the date, location and time were determined, an invitation was designed. **(See Exhibit 2).** Staff determined the design of the invitation would tie in with a holiday theme or with some other community event going on at or about the same time as the MYN event. An example of this is Pima County's Clean Air Challenge which occurs every year in the spring.

Once the invitation was designed in house, it was hand delivered along with a complimentary gift to all TRP employers and other surrounding employers. In order to give the Transportation Coordinators (TC) enough time to coordinate their schedules to attend the luncheon, the invitation was delivered approximately one month in advance. Additional telephone calls were made to confirm their attendance and an RSVP list was made to keep track of which employers were able to attend the planning luncheon. Once we had determined our number of attendees, we coordinated the food for the luncheon. In many cases, the host employer either agreed to sponsor the lunch or another TRP employer in that particular area was contacted and asked to donate the food. We had great success in this area as we found the majority of TRP employers were more than willing to help out.

After the invitations were delivered, it was time to create an agenda for the planning luncheon. **(See Exhibit 3)**. The agenda would consist of welcome and introductions, an overview of the MYN concept, a roundtable discussion to brainstorm ideas for the event, and closing remarks. An event ideas form was created to collect ideas from the TC's and to find out other important details such as best location to hold the MYN event, best time of day, what types of shifts employees work, how many employees will attend event, if shuttles would be needed, types of vendors/services that should be invited to the event, types of games and prize drawings, and entertainment. **(See Exhibit 4)**.

About two weeks before the planning luncheon, we started making final preparations for the luncheon. This included preparing:

- purchase requisitions to buy decorations and party favors,
- an internal agenda with staff assignments,
- center pieces for each table,
- goodie bags for every attendee, and
- all handouts for the luncheon.
-

The day of the planning luncheon always got our adrenalin going because we were excited about getting all employers involved in the planning stages of the MYN event. About two hours prior to the event, the room was decorated in the theme of the event and a registration table was set up. At each table place setting was an agenda, event ideas form, miscellaneous party favors and a thank you gift for attending. After the attendees had signed in at the registration table, they were able to get their lunch and talk with each other until the planning began.

To get things started off, we did a brief welcome and overview of the MYN concept and all attendees were asked to introduce themselves. In order to make everyone feel at ease, we did an ice breaker which helped to set the stage for the luncheon. A spokesperson was designated at each table to convey the ideas generated from that particular table using the event ideas form. We had great participation from all TC's as they were willing to share their thoughts and ideas on what they wanted to see at the event. It's so important to get as much feedback at the luncheon in order to work out all the details of the event. Make sure important details are finalized before everyone leaves the luncheon such as time, location, date, types of vendors to invite, and who would be willing to help solicit for prizes and vendors. Brief closing remarks were made and everyone was thanked for attending the luncheon.

After the planning luncheon was completed, the ideas generated from the TC's were compiled into a list and delivered along with the thank you gift to all non-attendees.

ACTUAL EVENT PLANNING/SCHEDULING

Once the event planning was completed, posters (11x17) and flyers (8 ½ x11) were designed highlighting "lunch on us", drawings with great prizes every fifteen minutes and dozens of local vendors. **(Exhibit 5)**. The posters and flyers were delivered to TRP employers and other companies in the targeted area at least three weeks prior to the event. In addition to the posters and flyers, we encouraged the TC's to include information about the event in their company newsletter, at weekly meetings and through e-mail messages. We provided sample newsletter inserts and e-mail messages to make it easy for the TC's.

Because of our limited budget, one of our goals was to get as many of the services and supplies needed either donated or discounted by local businesses in exchange for free advertising. We determined that the “free lunch” would be the main draw for employers and employees and that the food would be the largest expense for the event. The smoke and aroma of a barbeque always gets people’s attention so we approached a catering company with the MYN idea, our budget limit, and plans to hold several more events in the future. The company gave us a great deal with a cost of \$3.00 per person for hot dogs, chips and lemonade, ice tea and condiments and we continued to use their service at other events. We determined that up to 500 lunches would be provided as well as popcorn and fruit slushes for people who came before or after lunch. To control the food, we distributed lunch tickets at the RideShare Sign-Up tables (3-4) where employees could also fill out a RideShare Application to be eligible for the prize drawings.

We provided free lunch and entertainment at the events to encourage attendance and tried a mixture of entertainment, including a local dance group, a live radio station broadcast and DJ. The DJ provided the best entertainment with a variety of music and was also used to emcee the prize drawings and air quality trivia. Since all of the events took place outside, we used 10ft x 10ft canopies for the vendors and a 20ft x 10ft canopy for the lunch tables to provide shade. The 10 x 10 canopies held four vendors and five to six canopies were used for each event. The tables and chairs were provided by the host company or rented. A portable bathroom was also reserved and we were able to get bottled water donated for each event.

We prospected businesses in the targeted area for both vendors and drawing prize donations using a letter, event poster and small gift which were hand delivered. **(See Exhibit 6)**. We found that businesses were much more willing to participate in the MYN event when we were able to meet with them in person and explain the event and potential reach for advertising their products and services. Businesses such as bike shops, vanpool provider, transit, alternative fuel vehicles and environmental organizations were invited. Follow-up phone calls were made to schedule vendors and a list of prize donations was generated **(See Exhibit 7)**. Prizes included free oil changes, health club memberships, massages, weekend stays at hotels, lunches, dinners, etc. **(See Exhibit 8)**. For the four hour event, we collected an average of 35-45 prizes and sorted them in groups of 3-4 to be given away every fifteen minutes. The grand prize was announced at the noon hour when attendance was the largest.

Once the vendors were confirmed, an exhibitor’s map of the event was created with their location identified and the map, directions to the event and a confirmation letter were faxed to each vendor. **(See Exhibit 9)**. In addition to outside vendors, companies participating in the event were encouraged to have an information table to introduce themselves to the other businesses in their area. Three to four RideShare Sign-Up tables were set up in high traffic areas throughout the event for easy access to RideShare applications, to sign up for the prize drawings and to distribute lunch tickets. A press release was prepared and faxed to radio, print and television media a few days before the event and then faxed again on the day of the event. **(See Exhibit 10)**.

A script was prepared for the DJ, which outlined the format for the drawing times and prizes, thank you’s and recognition to the participating companies, and air quality trivia to be announced throughout the event. **(See Exhibit 11)**. The prizes were displayed on a table next to the DJ and included the names of the businesses donating prizes. Poster-size lists of the prizes were on display at the RideShare Sign-Up tables which contributed to the large number of registrants. The prizes and winners were announced every 15 minutes and the winners were told to collect their prizes next to the DJ.

A list of the winners was kept and each winner had to show identification and sign for their prize. If they had already returned to their work site, the prizes and a list of the winners were delivered to the company and distributed by the Transportation Coordinator at the site.

After the pilot MYN event, a checklist was generated to assist in coordinating event activities, materials, staff assignments, food, vendors and an “in case of bad weather alternate plan”. **(See Exhibit 12)**. The checklist began with the pre-event planning luncheon and categorized the “things to do” in a step by step format. For each event, there were three to four staff members; the RideShare and TRP Program Managers and the RideShare Representative and Employer Representative for the targeted area, who were responsible for the coordination of activities prior to the event day. Purchase Request Orders were prepared for the fruit slushes, popcorn, canopies and tables, etc. and flyers were made with the pick-up and drop-off location and times for work sites on the MYN shuttle route. **(See Exhibit 13)**. Materials for the RideShare Sign-Up tables were organized, entry tickets for the guessing game **(See Exhibit 14)** and air quality trivia table tents were prepared. Staff was assigned to work the RideShare Sign-Up tables, coordinate the prize drawing and assist the DJ, provide vendor assistance and directions to table and parking and set up the popcorn and beverage tables.

After soliciting private rental companies and TRP employers for a donated shuttle for the event, The City of Tucson and our gas company, Southwest Gas, agreed to provide two vans with drivers for our MYN shuttles. The shuttles were scheduled to arrive at each site every 15 minutes to ensure that employees returned back to their work site on time. Signs were made for the vans, identifying them as MYN shuttles and flyers were printed and delivered to the applicable TRP companies. Vendor gift bags were prepared with RideShare promotional items, some snacks and a bottle of water. At events that took place in the hotter months, a cool kote neck scarf, donated by Pima County Department of Environmental Quality’s Clean Air Program, was chilled and distributed to each vendor.

The tables and canopies were delivered to the event site at 7:30am on the day of the event and were met by TRP and RideShare staff to begin set-up. The MYN staff were given RideShare t-shirts to wear so they were easily identified and wore jeans or knee length shorts depending on the weather. Vendors and DJ began arriving at 9:30am and were given a goodie bag and provided assistance by a MYN staff member. The fruit slushes and popcorn were picked up at 10:00am and the shuttles began their route at 10:30am. Attendees picked up a lunch ticket at any of the RideShare Sign-Up tables and could be eligible for the prize drawing by filling out an application to receive a carpool matchlist by mail. A staff member was assigned to take lunch tickets at the buffet line and another staff was responsible for collecting the carpool applications at the RideShare Sign-Up tables before each drawing.

The flow of event traffic was generally light during the first hour and increased towards lunchtime, peaking around noon, and tapering off after 1:00pm. With the music playing and the aroma of food in the air, the MYN event is a fun and relaxed atmosphere for touring the colorful displays among the canopies. Attendees were able to ask questions, watch demonstrations, have lunch, visit with other area employees and listen to music. Staff is busy signing up carpoolers, distributing lunch tickets, answering questions about alternate modes, assisting vendors, taking pictures, coordinating the prize drawings and monitoring the needs of the event. As the event winds down, staff will check on any remaining food, request feedback from vendors, record prizes and winners, deliver prizes and begin clean-up to return the site to its original condition.

POST-EVENT/FOLLOW UP

After the MYN event was concluded, the next step was to complete the appropriate paperwork. The first priority was to determine the number of employees who attended the event and the number of carpool applications that were received. The carpool applications were sorted by employer, counted and then submitted to the RideShare Data Analyst for processing. A “lead” Employer/Community Outreach Event Sheet was completed for the event which tracked such things as type of event, materials needed, staff time, reach, and number of carpool applications received. An Outreach Event Sheet was also completed for each TRP employer who was invited to the event. **(See Exhibit 15).**

In cases where the employee was not present for the prize drawings, we hand delivered their prize to them. We kept a list of claimed and unclaimed prizes. This way, we were able to easily determine who we needed to deliver any unclaimed prizes to. If the employee wasn’t available at the time we delivered the prize, then the prize was left with their immediate supervisor. Although we had required a signature at the event for an employee to claim their prize, we felt that due to our staffing time constraints, we would not be able to re-deliver the unclaimed prize if the employee was not available on that particular day. The supervisor was always willing to deliver the prize to the employee and we had no problems with this arrangement.

In order to show our appreciation to the event host, a special thank you gift basket was hand delivered to the TC. The gift basket consisted of assorted RideShare promotional items, party favors and candy. A thank you card was also created in house and sent to the event host and all vendors and drawing prize contributors. **(See Exhibit 16).**

The next step was to determine the costs associated with the event and submit invoices for payment. Once we collected all receipts and calculated our expenses, we determined there were four major areas with costs incurred for the event. These costs were for entertainment, food, equipment rental and copying. We also received many donated services which helped to keep our costs relatively low for an event of this type.

The final step was to prepare a report/cost analysis of the MYN event. This report would include all details of the event such as meetings, contacts and all related correspondence to help plan future MYN events. By using this report, we were able to plan and coordinate the next MYN event.

SUMMARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The success of the MYN events has sparked interest among employers in other parts of our community to sponsor or be part of a MYN event in their area. To date, we have held five MYN and one mini-MYN event. Based on the outcome of these events, we have designed an outline for MYN events to be used as a step-by-step guide. **(See Exhibit 17).** Employers can then use this outline to plan and implement their own MYN event. A MYN event can be as large or small as staff and resources allow. The main focus should be food, prizes, fun and education on air quality and alternate modes.

LESSONS LEARNED

The following is a list of lessons learned from the MYN events:

- Have a host employer willing to commit to the sponsorship and coordination of the event. This also contributes to keeping the cost of the event relatively low.
- Encourage employers to permit flexibility in the amount of time allowed for lunch.
- Keep the time frame to approximately four hours for each event. If time is more than four hours, attendees will lose interest.
- Don't be afraid to ask for discounts/donated services from vendors and host employer.
- Create a banner to display at the event for good visibility.
- Create a festive atmosphere within your budget by using balloons, theme decorations and other inexpensive items.
- The use of canopies should be considered at all events due to unpredictable weather.
- Provide food such as hot dogs, chips and drinks and other refreshments to draw employees to the event.
- Prepare a press release and media follow up.
- Holding prize drawings at the event helps keep the energy level high as well as holds the interest of the attendees. Require a picture I.D. of prize winners.
- Require attendees to visit a RideShare table to receive a lunch ticket. This gives you the opportunity to inform the attendee of the purpose of the event and to sign up for carpool matching to be eligible for the prize drawings.
- Music is a must to maintain a festive atmosphere. Having a DJ at the event provided the most effective way to entertain with a variety of music. The DJ also assisted in announcing prize drawing winners and giving air quality trivia facts.
- Display a map, by zip code, of registrants from the RideShare database showing the general location of where employees live.

POSITIVE RESULTS

The MYN events have generated positive feedback from employers. The results are as follows:

- Provided a friendly atmosphere for governmental agencies to interact with the public.
- Greater awareness among employees of the region as to their commuting options and the air quality benefits of using alternate modes.
- Increased knowledge about the services available in the area to reduce vehicle miles traveled for mid-day and after work trips.
- Generated a measured increase in alternate mode usage of 30% by employers who participated in MYN events.
- Opened up lines of communication among area employers increasing networking possibilities among TC's.
- Provided employees an opportunity to try a hands-on demonstration of using alternate fueled vehicles, electric bikes and scooters with no obligation.
- Provided participants the opportunity to ask questions about alternate fueled vehicles directly from the providers.
- Provided an audience for vendors to market their non-polluting vehicles as well as other products and services.
- Provided a greater "comfort level" among commuters so carpooling and vanpooling can occur more easily.
- Generated a list of frequently used vendors to use at other MYN events.
- Over 1,100 RideShare matchlists were generated from all of the MYN events.
- Shuttles were an alternative way for employees to get to and from the event.
- Provided information to the employees on bicycling, walking, vanpooling and transit options and gave them an opportunity to ask questions.
- Increased interest within the business community about holding other transportation related events.

SUMMARY OF COSTS

The following table summarizes the costs for each event. The average cost incurred per event was approximately \$2,800. This cost does not include staff time. The total amount of staff time spent on each event is approximately 96 hours for a staff of 12. This includes preparing materials for event, set up of event, staffing event and take down after event.

COST COMPARISON BY EVENT

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR EVENT	HOST EMPLOYER	DATE OF EVENT	INCURRED COSTS	DONATED PRIZES	DONATED SERVICES
Marana MYN	Sargent Controls	03/26/99	\$1,938.06	\$ 840.00	\$4,275.00*
Downtown MYN	City of Tucson	04/23/99	\$2,514.05	\$1,435.75	\$ 500.00**
Airport MYN	Bombardier Aerospace	06/09/99	\$2,722.59	\$ 832.00	\$1,350.00+
Eastside MYN	Cross Country Group	11/12/99	\$3,182.50	\$1,721.00	\$ 710.00
Northside MYN	Honeywell International	03/17/00	\$3,621.54	\$1,034.00	\$ 250.00

*This cost included a one-time donation of a live remote from a local radio station valued at \$2,900.

**This event piggybacked on the City of Tucson's Annual Earth Day Event.

+The host employer of this event had a separate budget to spend on the event.

Our very first MYN event (Marana MYN) was the least expensive. This was due to the fact that we did not have a budget for this event. We also spent more time on planning this event since it would serve as a model for other MYN events. The host employer was also very supportive and assisted with the planning stages. After seeing the results of the Marana MYN event, we applied for grant monies through the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) to cover the cost of the events. The amount we received from the TIP was \$20,000. In order to receive this funding, we agreed to hold a total of five MYN events.

As we continued to hold MYN events, our costs increased. Although our host employers were committed to the events, we received less donated services from the host employer. We also had less time to contact outside vendors for donated services due to staffing needs. We felt these two reasons contributed to our rising costs of planning a MYN event.

We hope to continue these events; however, based on staff resources and budget, we have concluded that holding two MYN events during the year is sufficient. In the Tucson region, the best times to hold an event are in the spring and fall. Good luck planning your own "Meet Your Neighbor" event!!!

EXHIBITS

- 1. Sample TRP Survey Analysis Report**
- 2. Invitation to MYN Planning Luncheon**
- 3. Planning Luncheon Agenda**
- 4. Sample MYN Event Ideas Form**
- 5. MYN Event Poster**
- 6. Vendor and Prize Donation Request Letters**
- 7. List of MYN Event Vendors**
- 8. List of Drawing Prize Donations**
- 9. MYN Event - Exhibitor's Map**
- 10. MYN Event Press Release**
- 11. DJ Script**
- 12. MYN Event Checklist**
- 13. Flyer for MYN Shuttle**
- 14. "Nuts About Carpooling" Guessing Game Entry**
- 15. Employer/Community Outreach Event Sheet**
- 16. Vendor/Prize Donation Thank You Card**
- 17. MYN Step-by-Step Outline**